

both Mr. WALZ and Mr. WENSTRUP are both veterans, and we are so grateful for their service to our country in so many different ways.

Mr. Chair, it was our first commander-in-chief, George Washington, who said, and I paraphrase, that we can never expect young men and women to rise to the occasion to fight for our country and for our freedom unless we take care of those who have already sacrificed on the battlefield. So the wonderful thing about serving on the Committee for Veterans Affairs, Mr. Chair, is that it is completely bipartisan.

This is all about our veterans. We just love them in the State of Maine—66,000 veterans strong in our Second District of Maine, Mr. Chair. We have one of the highest percentages of our population that are veterans in the country, and we are very, very proud of that.

I must say that, in my dealings with Togus—which is, by the way, Mr. Chair, the first military hospital in the country. It is about 150 years old now. They set up to take care of our Civil War veterans about 150 years ago.

In any event, in talking with the folks at Togus, they made it very clear to me, Mr. Chair, that one of their biggest problems they have, and it is ongoing, is: How do we hire quickly and retain the best quality doctors, nurses, and medical technicians to care for our heroes?

That is why I am so excited and grateful for this opportunity to vote for H.R. 1367, because it helps solve one of these problems. It removes red tape in the hiring process. It streamlines the hiring process.

The Veterans Administration has about 360,000 employees, so it is a very large organization. When that happens, of course, you need to deal with administrative burdens and red tape and what have you.

So I am encouraging all of my fellow colleagues here, Republicans and Democrats, to make sure they vote for this bill, H.R. 1367, because our best fought for us, Mr. Chair, our best fought for us. It is time that our best take care of those who fought for us.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chairman, I have no further speakers and will be prepared to close after the gentleman is done.

Mr. Chair, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, once again, I encourage all Members to support H.R. 1367, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. WALZ. Mr. Chair, I can't thank the gentleman enough—smart legislation combining many good ideas, willingness to incorporate those best practices, and then, I think, forcing VA to start moving in that direction.

This is an example, I think, of where the VA is at. And while we may disagree, and you saw a little bit of it today, it is not because there is any disagreement on what the final outcome is.

Dr. WENSTRUP's bill is smart. It will improve care; it will get good people in the VA; it will retain them; and it will improve HR practices to make sure that happens.

I encourage my colleagues to support the bill and some of the amendments that will work to improve upon a very good piece of legislation.

Mr. Chair, I yield back the balance of my time.

The CHAIR. All time for general debate has expired.

Mr. WENSTRUP. Mr. Chair, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. POLIQUIN) having assumed the chair, Mr. BUDD, Chair of the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 1367) to improve the authority of the Secretary of Veterans Affairs to hire and retain physicians and other employees of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

CELEBRATING THE LIFE OF LOUISE HOPKINS UNDERWOOD

(Mr. ARRINGTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. ARRINGTON. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to celebrate the life and legacy of Louise Hopkins Underwood, a west Texas icon who passed away Tuesday, March 7, at the age of 97.

Mrs. Underwood was known as a charismatic woman with a sharp sense of humor. A woman loved by all, she was gracious, she was generous, and she was inspirational.

Mrs. Underwood was the mother of six and a pioneer in her quest to promote a passion for the arts and a stronger sense of community on the south plains.

Our region, which has a rich history better known for farming and ranching, is now also known for the arts, thanks to Mrs. Underwood.

Ecclesiastes 7:1 says:

A good name is better than fine perfume, and the day of death better than the day of birth.

Thank you, Mrs. Underwood. Thank you for your fragrant life and for leaving a legacy of a brighter, more colorful west Texas.

God bless the Underwood family.

CONDEMNING HEALTHCARE BILL

(Mr. GOTTHEIMER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. GOTTHEIMER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak out against the healthcare bill that is currently making its way through the House. It is an attack on seniors that will raise New Jersey taxes, and I refuse to sit idly by.

First, it includes a premium senior tax that would make older Americans

pay five times more for their health care.

Second, the plan before Congress takes aim at long-term care to support the elderly and disabled and could ultimately throw seniors out of nursing homes. Three out of five nursing home residents in New Jersey rely on Medicaid to access long-term care.

Finally, it is not only seniors who would be hurt. This bill is a new tax on all New Jersey residents. It cuts Medicaid and leaves the State holding the bag for other States, and it puts additional costs on New Jersey to confront healthcare challenges like the opioid crisis sweeping our State.

We need a bipartisan fix to the Affordable Care Act. This plan does just the opposite. I am ready to sit at the table with Democrats, Republicans, and Independents to come up with a real fix.

BILLIONAIRE'S BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BUDD). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2017, the gentleman from Washington (Ms. JAYAPAL) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous material on the subject of my Special Order.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Washington?

There was no objection.

Ms. JAYAPAL. Mr. Speaker, this evening I rise to speak on behalf of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, and I believe some of my colleagues will be joining me, to talk about the budget that has just been released by this President.

I would like to say, Mr. Speaker, that while it is being called a skinny budget, we call it the billionaire's budget. It is the same misguided, rambling, unfocused, bloated giveaway to rich and corporate interests that has been offered for years.

My belief is that a budget is a statement of our values. This budget ensures that the rich get richer at the cost of working people, the environment, and the future of our country.

Funding has been axed for nearly 20 agencies, from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting to the National Endowment for the Arts and the National Endowment for the Humanities. In addition to elimination of these important agencies, the billionaire's budget guts funding for several other important agencies.

You can see here by this chart from The Washington Post exactly what is happening: the Environmental Protection Agency chopped by 31 percent; the State Department cut by 29 percent; Agriculture cut by 21 percent, the Labor Department by 21 percent.